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RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4426
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3526
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8561
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 6006
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0696
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2830
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000610

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: HIGH LEVEL INDIAN DELEGATION URGES
POLITICAL SOLUTION

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires James R. Moore, for reasons 1.4(b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Indian Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan, Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon and Defense Secretary Vijay Singh made an unannounced, two-day visit to Colombo from June 20-21 to meet with Sri Lankan officials, military service chiefs, and Tamil political party leaders. Indian DCM A. Manickam told Charge on June 23 that the visit was intended to lay the ground work for India's participation in the early August SAARC Summit in Colombo. The GOI expressed serious concerns about security for the summit and plans to bring its own security assets. The delegation stressed the need for a political rather than a military solution to Sri Lanka's conflict, and urged the GSL to fully implement the 13th Amendment and demonstrate its commitment to genuine devolution of power. The delegation also raised concerns about the quantity and sophistication of weapons the GSL is receiving from Pakistan and China. Following media speculation about the visit, which was kept under wraps, opposition parties have asked the ruling coalition to disclose the purpose and outcomes of the visit. End Summary.

High Level Indian Team Meets GSL Counterparts
and Tamil Party Leaders

¶2. (U) Indian Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan, Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon and Defense Secretary Vijay Singh made an unannounced, two-day visit to Colombo from June 20-21. The group met with Sri Lankan Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa, Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa and Presidential Secretary Lalith Weeratunga, and separately with President Mahinda Rajapaksa. They also attended a dinner hosted by Central Bank Governor Ajit Cabraal, and met with the heads of the security forces and the police. Local press reported that Sri Lankan government sources said the talks were a "continuation of close dialogue between the countries," including follow up on the discussions held when a high-level Sri Lankan delegation visited New Delhi in September 2007.

¶3. (U) In addition to the government meetings, the delegation met with prominent Tamil leaders including Tamil National Alliance (TNA) leader R. Sampanthan, Eelam People's

Democratic Party (EPDP) leader Douglas Devananda, and Ceylon Workers Congress leader Arumugan Thondaman. The delegation reportedly emphasized the need for Tamil unity to negotiate a political solution with the Sinhalese-majority government. Devananda told local press that he shared his views on the current situation with the Indians and asked for assistance to develop the north.

¶4. (U) Indian officials told Colombo journalists that "India hopes that Sri Lanka can find a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflict within the framework of a united Sri Lanka, acceptable to all the communities. There are no military solutions." The delegation described the visit as "constructive and successful."

GOI Delivers Messages on SAARC Security,
Peace Process, Devolution, and Arms Procurement

¶5. (C) Indian DCM A. Manickam told Charge on June 23 that the visit was intended to lay the ground work for India's participation in the early August SAARC Summit in Colombo. The Indians expressed serious concerns about security for the summit and possible LTTE attempts to prevent or disrupt the event. India plans to bring its own security assets to the summit, including two MI-17 helicopters to transport Indian delegates around Colombo, and will support Sri Lankan efforts to provide naval and air protection. The GSL welcomed this assistance.

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¶6. (C) Manickam said the delegation wanted to reiterate India's position on the conflict prior to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's arrival in Colombo for the SAARC summit. The delegation stressed the need for a political rather than a military solution to the conflict. India urged the GSL to pursue a political approach that addresses the grievances of Sri Lanka's Tamils and other minorities and to consider returning to peace talks with the LTTE. They said another year of bloodshed was not sustainable or acceptable. The GSL replied that it needs another year to achieve a military victory and that a political solution is not possible as long as LTTE leader Prabhakaran is alive.

¶7. (C) On the East, the group urged the GSL to fully implement the 13th Amendment and demonstrate in the East that it is committed to genuine devolution of power to the provincial councils. The delegation expressed concern that the GSL is not allowing newly elected Chief Minister Sivasathurai Chandrakanthan (Pillaiyan) to exercise the full range of his authority. Manickam said that Basil Rajapaksa was receptive to this argument, while the President was "more evasive."

¶8. (C) Lastly, Manickam said the delegation raised concerns about the quantity and sophistication of weapons the GSL is receiving from Pakistan and China. The Indians argued that the weapons, such as anti-tank missiles, that Sri Lanka is obtaining from China and Pakistan are not compatible with the threat posed by the LTTE.

¶9. (C) Manickam characterized the tone of the meetings as cordial, but said the delegation delivered strong messages on the need for a political solution and concern over Sri Lankan large-scale procurement of weapons from sources other than India. However, he said he did not expect the GSL to back down from its pursuit of a military solution or its procurement of weapons from China and Pakistan.

Opposition Wants an Explanation

¶10. (U) Following intense speculation in the local media, Sri Lanka's opposition parties have asked the ruling coalition to disclose the purpose and outcomes of the visit

to the public. UNP member John Amaratunga said the visit came at a time when the country was "at a crossroads on the economic and war fronts" and that his party is "eager to know the true position of the visit." The JVP has drawn parallels to 1987 when "India intervened to stop the military operation against the LTTE and later forced a peace accord on the Sri Lankan Government." JVP Parliamentary group leader Anura Kumara Disanayake said "it is the responsibility of the government to disclose the details of the visit" and dispel the rumors appearing in the press. Other media theories about the purpose of the trip include appeasing Tamil Nadu sentiments, planning for Indian military intervention when the Mullaithivu campaign reaches a decisive stage, conveying Indian concerns over Sri Lanka's ties to China and Pakistan, and finalizing a peace package.

¶11. (C) COMMENT: The visit has drawn significant local attention and sparked wide speculation about its purpose and outcomes, with some observers hopeful of increased Indian engagement and others skeptical of Indian interference. The delegation notably did not meet with the any Sinhalese opposition leaders, including the UNP leadership, although Ranil Wickremesinghe met with Narayanan and Menon in New Delhi in early June. Post agrees with Manickam's assessment that the GSL is unlikely to end its military campaign or its arms procurement from China and Pakistan, but we expect that Indian pressure may have some positive impact on the GSL's strategy in the East.

MOORE